The physical environment of Washo territory is marked by its variety of terrain, climate, flora, and fauna, primarily due to variations in altitude within a comparatively small area. The Sierra Nevada rises gradually to the east of the central valley of California from near sea level to peaks over 10,000 feet in altitude, then it drops abruptly on the eastern slope to about 5,000 feet. Generally the Washo lived at 4,500 to 5,500 feet in the valleys east of the Sierra Nevada; around 5,500 to 7,500 in the highlands; and their treks took them down to 3,000 feet on the west side of the Sierra. This gave them a wide range of habitats in mountain-valley terrain.

The highlands and western slopes had yellow pine, fir, and hemlock vegetation, a transitional and boreal life zone; humid mesothermal and microthermal climates; and zones receiving between 10 to 60 inches of annual precipitation. In the mountains the summers are warm, with rains through July. Snows start in November, followed by cold weather with freezing nights until April.

In the lowlands to the east of the Sierra Nevada the Washo had pinon and juniper vegetation, an upper sonoran life zone, and an arid-cold-steppe climate (Elsasser 1960, 3-6). These areas have 100-140 days of growing season and all farming requires irrigation (Department of Economic Development n.d.). The weather station at Minden, Nevada is 4,730 feet above sea level. It has recorded an annual precipitation of 8.73 inches, an average growing season of 144 days from May 29 to September 20, a high maximum temperature of 109° F. and a low maximum of -24° F.

Throughout Washo territory the average variability of annual precipitation is around 20-25%. In the months of December through February 60-70% of possible sunshine is received and the figure is 80-90% in the months of June through August.

The mountains and lakes (especially Lake Tahoe), the high percentage of sunny days, and legalized gambling in Nevada make tourism the major industry in Washo territory today. Cattle raising and dairying are the most important agrarian industries. Lumbering and mining are of minor importance (Department of Economic Development n.d.).

Compared with other tribes in the Great Basin the Washo occupied a very abundant environment. Hamilton described the Truckee River country in 1844 as "a hunter's paradise, with the streams full of fish and blue grouse in every direction" (Sieber 1951, 162). This abundance is reflected in the fact that the Washo had a higher population density than any other Great Basin tribe. Kroeber (1947, 137) gives a figure for the Washo that comes out as 2.4 square miles per person. The average population density for all of the Great Basin was roughly 15 square miles per person (Steward 1938, 46).

the house of either of their parents. When the couple had a few children of their own they might then set up a household separate from their parents. 591

Although not as important as the destruction of the goods of the deceased, gifts were given by the mourners to the deceased. There is an indication in the notes of Dangberg (n.d., 6) that the gifts were laid upon the corpse and buried with it. The gifts were offered to the spirit of the deceased to make it content to stay away. 764 431 [782] [775]

Feasts

The feast was characterized by the distribution of an abundance of food and the announcement that anyone who comes will be fed. There was often dancing, games, and gambling at these events. Sponsorship was of three kinds: kinship group, task group, and communal. 574

The kinship-group sponsored feasts were connected with births and puberty ceremonies. The feast following a birth was a small affair and only close friends and relatives attended. The puberty ceremony feasts were attended by a large number of people. They were publicized by four fires built up the side of a hill the night of the feast. With only three days of notice, from the onset of the girl's menstruation to the evening of the feast, the gathering and preparation of foods had to be done quickly by the girl's family and relatives. Today this, more than any other event, unites kinsmen into a hard working, well organized, social group. These feasts involved gift and ceremonial exchange. [844] [881] [182] [431]

A second type of feast was sponsored by a task group. A particularly successful hunting, fishing, or gathering trip was often followed by a feast. These feasts involved task group sharing. [22]

A third type of feast was sponsored communally. Feasts that preceded the fall pinenut harvesting (tagum gumsabay?) were of this type. At these times fish and large game would be prepared communally and distributed according to the size of the family. These feasts involved familial sharing and are analogous to the "potluck diner" in our own culture.

Ceremonial Disposal

Ceremonial disposal includes a number of diverse practices among the Washo. The Washo threw a pinch of pinenut meal on the ground before each meal as a ritual propitiation of nature. They offered some food with prayers to nature at the spring and fall dances and when the first samples of each kind of plant food was gathered. These were essentially first-fruit rites. 782 [264] [533] [241]

is made in reference to the benefits paid by either Nevada or California. Unemployment compensation is paid by the respective states, as is compensation for injuries received on the job. The destitute receive assistance from state and county funds. Employment is sought in the same channels, public and private, as it is by white workers. The Washo drink in integrated cocktail lounges, gamble at integrated gaming tables and eat in integrated restaurants (although in all three instances certain establishments refuse to serve Indians). 177 648

The Washo tribe as a socio-political entity cannot be said to exist. A tribal council of members elected from the various Washo communities is largely ineffectual. Tribal consciousness, insofar as it exists, centers on the possibility of sharing in an eventual settlement of the Washo claim against the government. Several claims and suits in the name of the tribe actually have been instigated by individuals. Except for the 40-acre Dresslerville community, there is no tribal land. The pinenut allotments are owned individually, although the tribe holds a power of attorney to lease the land for grazing. This responsibility has in fact passed into the hands of the Indian agent at Stewart, Nevada, who receives and disburses the income from the leases. [623] [423]

There is no distinctly Washo economic occupational role, nor is there a separate Washo economic system. These statements should not be interpreted to mean that the Washo are enjoying all the benefits of modern white society without restriction or hindrance. The assimilation of the Washo by and large has been into the lowest and least privileged rung of the white social structure. Nor are the statements referring to social assimilation to be construed as an argument that the Washo have become totally acculturated. Although the Washo no longer exist as a compact social group, Washo culture, particularly in its less tangible aspects, has retained much of its viability, and the Washo form a clearly identifiable ethnic minority in western Nevada and eastern California.

Agriculture and Animal Husbandry

I did not discover a single family, indisputably Washo, that supported itself by raising livestock or growing crops, although a number of them live on holdings that would at least provide garden produce. One man near Woodfords does plant and care for about 2 acres of corn, but he is considered "half-Maidu" by his Washo neighbors. His grandfather had indeed married a Maidu bride and the family has been considered deviant since then. Although he identifies himself as a Washo, he tends to participate only minimally in tribal affairs, and is a member of an American Indian organization long since abandoned by other Washo. 241 563 [433]

224
[125] had encountered and display understandable pride at having conquered them. "Them old bucks that live around here . . . they are smarter than people" was a frequent comment. In varying degrees this attitude was evident among other Washo men. Details of hunts or feats of hunting prowess which occurred
[732] 40 years ago were recalled again and again. The contempt many of them felt
[388] for an aged, usually drunk, and half-blind claimant for tribal "chieftainship" was often explained by a statement like: "He never hunted or nothing . . . so don't believe nothing he tells you about it. He just hung around camp and didn't do nothing."

233
825 A number of Washo expressed what might be described as an enmity toward sheep. One might interpret this as an evidence of the common contempt for sheep in contrast to cattle. However, upon exploring this attitude, I began to feel that my informants viewed sheep as competitors who ate valuable food plants and spoiled good gathering areas. There would seem to be little difference between sheep and sheepowners in the Washo mind. If there
[262] is any difference it appears that more hostility is directed toward the animals. Cook (1941, 48) reports a distinct aversion to mutton among the Washo.

231
241 One might explain the present low frequency of agriculture and husbandry among the Washo as simply a result of the historic and political factors
311 that left them without land of sufficient quality or quantity to permit agricul-
177 ture or husbandry. However, an examination of the course of Washo history since the appearance of whites in this area suggests that other factors play an important role in this situation.

231 Aboriginally the Washo kept dogs and used at least some of them for hunting. However, the number was small because of depredations of predators on litters of puppies. One informant recalls being told of collars made of flint points which were worn by dogs to protect them from mountain lions. In addition to dogs, eagles were trapped and kept for ceremonial purposes. All modern Washo are aware that one old man in early historic times attempted to keep captive fledgling eagles on cradleboards so they could be transported easily and raised to maturity. The experiment seems to have been a failure.

825 D'Azevedo (personal communication) reports that older informants told him of cutting the top boughs from trees in the winter to supply browse for deer herds and thus encourage the animals to remain in the area. Whether this was an aboriginal practice or an inspiration based on white husbandry practices is not clear.

241 Nor was agriculture any further developed than husbandry. Tobacco was not grown, nor was any action taken to encourage the growth of wild

grasses or other plants. The Washo were well aware that pigweed, an important seed crop, grows profusely in areas that have been burned over, but apparently no attempt was ever made to burn areas to encourage growth of the plant. 241

Domestic Animals

We must assume that the Washo knew of domestic animals among the Spanish and Indians of the coast (see Cook [1960, 243] on Indian horse tribes in California), and in all probability among the Shoshoni, Ute and Bannock to the east. However, Washo tradition is without mention of the introduction of horses. A specific incident, which could not have occurred earlier than the 1840's, was related by my informants and was reported to Lowie (1939, 3). A cow, or ox, strayed from a wagon train and was found by a party of Washo. The Indian response was characteristic of Washo response to livestock ever since. The animal was led, ridden, packed, teased, and then slaughtered and eaten. This single incident constitutes the only reference to domestic animals in the folklore of the Washo. 177 231

Questioning informants about Washo use of livestock proved to be one of the more tedious and unrewarding areas of investigation. Informants described long journeys undertaken in the past century, and only the most persistent questioning revealed that the trips were made with a wagon and team. The Washo still take great pride in their own and their ancestors' ability as pedestrian travelers. Even today, 5, 10, or 15 mi. walks are undertaken quite casually by many Washo, particularly middle-aged and older people. The earliest mention of Washo in connection with white livestock in the historical sources is a newspaper account of an incident that occurred in the 1850's. A group of Washo ran off a number of horses belonging to some white people attending a dance in Washo Valley. The guests broke off dancing, mounted the remaining horses, and set out in pursuit. Less than 2 mi. from the dance hall the posse found the horse thieves busily engaged in eating the stolen animals. Shots were fired and the Indians scrambled into the darkness. There is an undertone of humor in stories of this nature. White men are revolted by horse eating and are contemptuous, disgusted, amazed, or merely amused by a people who see horses only as meat on the hoof. Moreover, a lack of concern with the possible punishment for thievery seemed so unusual to white men that it was humorous rather than enraging. Nonetheless, the whites in Washo Valley tended to view the Washo as being more hostile than in other areas. During the last half of the 19th century, scattered newspaper references make it clear that at least some Washo owned and rode horses. Generally, news accounts suggest that most Washo were still [124] [492] [484] 175 177 231 648 [262] 231 [175]

231 Generally, News accounts suggest that most Washo were still
[489] pedestrian. Modern informants in their fifties confirm this, and recall acorn gathering, hunting, and pinenut trips made on foot. Older white informants recall that the Indians had "a few" horses in their boyhood, which was in the 1880's.

177 222 492 Washo informants report that part of their recompense for assisting in harvests was the transportation to the pinenut groves furnished by the ranchers. This shortened the time consumed in traveling, and allowed the Washo to pick more nuts because the return trip was also made in wagons furnished by the whites.

175 177 492 764 Another newspaper account of the late 19th century reports that the Washo of the Genoa colony borrowed a team and wagon in order to transport the body of a well known Indian woman to the Indian cemetery.

177 423 [233] Of other livestock there is no report. Cattle were probably killed and eaten when opportunity or income made it possible, but no one, white or Washo, can recall any attempt at animal husbandry. One suspects that any such attempt would have been quickly discouraged by white ranchers. There was no long frontier period during which land ownership was ambiguous in Nevada. Less than 20 years after the first settlement Nevada was admitted as a state, and, soon after, stock laws that encouraged fencing and other clarification of land holdings were instituted. Timber and water rights were extremely profitable almost from the beginning of white settlement and were, therefore, quickly secured by law and protected. Some of the Washo early established claims under squatters' rights or homestead laws and secured legally protected lands for themselves. However, most such claims were made in areas considered as winter camps with reference to wood, water, and shelter rather than grazing. In later times such claims proved to be valuable for timber, and many Washo became profitably involved in the lumbering business in positions varying from lumberjack to timber cruiser, buyer or hauler, laborer in lumber mills, and in one instance the owner of a lumber mill. In the 1890's many Washo became owners of teams of horses and wagons, which they used in their subsistence rounds. The acorn gathering trip to Big Trees in Calaveras County was made by several families at a time. The traditional en route camping spots were often bypassed in favor of locations with grass for grazing the teams. Similar trips were made to Placerville to pick acorns. In both instances, these trips became possible only after the whites had constructed roads over the mountains. Their involvement in the agricultural processes of white men had taught most Washo men the basic techniques of driving teams hitched to mowers, hay rakes, or wagons by the 1890's. Farm skills were taught at the Stewart Indian School, which for a number of years served only local Indians. However, most men

[313] [464] 177 222 492 177 241 971 [492]

However, most men 177 ●
who attended Stewart express resentment at being worked on the school farm, 241
although they evidence pride over their attendance and resent bitterly that 871
the school now serves Indians of many tribes. [186]

In the past and today, local white folklore holds that Washo are inex- 492
pert horsemen and cannot learn to be cowboys. I can neither confirm nor
deny this opinion, because I failed to see a single Washo on horseback dur- [422]
ing my visit. One man, biologically if not culturally a Washo, owns a string [427]
of pack and riding horses which he rents to hunters for whom he serves as [178]
guide. However, this occupation appears to be one of the reasons other
Washo feel he has "gone on the white man's road."

One significant but short-lived effect of the introduction of the horse 177
was that it permitted rabbit hunters to kill more rabbits than in pre-horse 224
days. Rabbit drives were usually conducted by men using bows and guns, the 492
net having been abandoned very soon after white contact. Each man carried
his kill on a belt that could hold up to 17 rabbits. A hunter with a horse
could have his wife, son, or younger brother ride or lead a horse behind
him to carry the kill. In this way, a good shot could take as many as 40 rab-
bits a day. However, the very nature of this utilization discouraged the
wider institutionalization of the horse. Following the hunter required no
equestrian skill and, in fact, was a secondary role to be abandoned as soon
as the rider, if he was a boy, was old enough or could afford a weapon of his
own.

Older informants recall that some Washo were hired as riders to ac- 464
company cattle herds to the railhead or into high range. It is significant that 492
they mention specifically that only this temporary type of herding job was
available and make it clear that no Washo became a year-round cowboy.

It appears clear from statements of informants that Washo quickly 177
adopted the automobile and abandoned wagons and teams. As Cook points 489
out, the automobile gave back to the pedestrian Indian a mobility he had lost 492
during the interval between the appearance of the whites and the development 493
of the automobile (Cook, 1941, 84). I feel that this change took place because
the Washo had never made the adjustments necessary to maintain horses or
other livestock efficiently, and therefore welcomed the automobile, which
ceased to make demands on its owner's time and attention as soon as he
turned off the ignition and got out. Moreover the appearance of the railroad 177
within a few years after the arrival of the whites obviated the need for the 489
horse for long-distance travel. Early day railroad "public relations" policy
permitted Indians throughout the West to ride without charge. In return, the
Indians often warned railroaders of broken track, washouts, and other
obstructions.

Washo NT20
Achomawi NS5

ANTHROPOLOGICAL RECORDS

NWA 222

	To	Kl	Kl	Kl	To	To	Pa	Wa	At	Sa	Tg	Wd	Kl	At
487. Spatulate end	–	–	–	–	–	+	–	–	–	–	+	–	–	–
488a. Point both ends	+	–	–	–	–	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
489. Of mt. mahogany (tupi)	+	+	+	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
490. Of serviceberry (tuavoi)	–	–	+	–	–	–	–	–	+	–	+	+	+	–
491. Of greasewood (tonovi)	–	–	+	–	+	–	–	–	+	+	–	+	–	–
492. Conical seed basket (tihmaymono)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	+	+
493. Basketry seed beater (tsiku)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
496. Stiff edged	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
499. Seed knife ("sickle")	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	–	–
500. Woodsa	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
501. Shin bone	–	–	–	–	–	+	–	+	–	–	–	–	–	–
501a. Stone	+	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	+	+	–	+	–	–

Agriculture

Wild Seeds

NWA 241

506. Wild seeds irrigated	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
509. Burning for tobacco	+	+	+	+	+	–	+	•	+	+	•	+	+	+
510. Burning for wild seeds	–	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	–	–	+	+

Seed Storage

NWA 251

521. Storage in pit	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
522. Bark or grass lined	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
523. Storage in basket	–	–	+	–	–	–	+	+	–	–	+	+	+	+
525. Storage in bark bag (kwisi)	–	–	+	+	+	+	–	–	+	–	+	+	+	+
526. Storage in buckskin bag	–	+	+	+	+	+	–	+	–	–	–	+	–	–
527. Storage in cave	–	–	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	•	–	–
528. Storage in rock granny	–	–	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	+	–	–

Food Preparation

NWA 317

529. Salt from: playa	+	+	+	–	–	•	•	+	•	–	–	–	–	–
530. Mineral from rocks	–	+	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	•	–	–	–	–
530a. Trade from south	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
532. Small mammals roasted, eaten whole	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
533. Roasted, entrails removed	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
534. Roasted, entrails boiled, eaten	–	+	+	+	+	–	–	+	–	–	+	+	+	+
535. Meat: dried on coals	–	–	–	+	–	–	–	+	–	–	–	–	+	+
536. Dried on frame in sun	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
537. Dried in trees	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
538. Smoked	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
539. In house	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	•	–	–
540. Pulverized	–	+	+	–	–	+	•	–	+	+	+	–	–	–
541. Mixed with seeds	–	+	+	–	–	+	–	–	+	+	+	–	–	–
542. Mixed with berries	–	+	–	–	–	+	–	–	+	–	+	–	–	–
543. Mixed with fat	–	+	–	–	–	+	–	+	+	+	+	–	–	–
544. Stored in sage bags	+	+	–	–	–	+	–	+	+	+	+	–	–	–
545. Tripe eaten	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
546. Blood cooked in pouch, gut	+	–	+	+	•	–	+	+	+	–	+	•	+	+
547. Fish	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	+	+
548. Dried in shade, not sun	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
550. Smoked in sweat house	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
551a. Spawn (eggs) dried with seed	•	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	–	–	–
552. Pulverized	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	+	+	+	–	–	–
553. Bone: cooked bone ground	–	+	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	+	–	–	–	–
553a. Only fish bones ground	•	+	+	–	–	–	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
554. Ground bone cooked	–	–	–	–	–	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
555. Vertebrae ground	–	–	–	–	–	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	–
556. Joints ground	–	–	–	–	–	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	–
557. Entire bones: marrow extracted	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	+	+	+	+

[p. 376]